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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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Subject: "COMMUNITY CANNING CENTERS" Information from food distribution officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

It hasn't been so long since American families in a community got together to solve in a cooperative way, common problems and common needs. From barn-raising to road-building, and from threshings to apple-butterings...all get together to do a job that had to be done but which was too big for the individual family to tackle alone. Even today there are many community enterprises that are still done in a community way.

Since the war these enterprises have become more numerous. Changes have had to take place in our normal life because of the war and one of these changes has been a new reliance on our neighbors. Car-pools, locally-sponsored nurseries for the children of war-working mothers, garden plots shared by several families...these have all been born of war necessity. They have, however, proved so successful that there is every reason to believe that some of these programs will continue when peace comes. Surely, if the rate at which community canning centers are being established is any basis for making a bet, we can safely bet that homemakers will want to continue working with their neighbors even when the sheer necessity for the centers is over.

Right now, though, there is little choice. War emergency demands upon the commercial packs of fruits and vegetables are so great that homemakers simply can't hope to get all the canned products they'd like to buy. If their pantry shelves this winter are to have the quantity and kinds of canned products they've held in the past, it will be up to the homemaker by her own efforts

to put them there.

Another point is involved here too. War has put enormous strains on our food transportation and marketing facilities. It isn't always possible nowadays to move all the tomatoes, or cabbage, or beans produced in one area into the national markets. It is up to the people living close to the producing areas to preserve fresh foods that otherwise would go to waste.

Many homemakers, of course, will fill their larder with cans of tomatoes, beans, peaches, chicken, and meats processed in their own kitchen. But there will be some who lack the materials, the facilities, and the time to do an efficient, individual job. For them, the answer is a Community Canning Center. Here with their neighbors they will bring their crops from Victory Gardens and farms and together will preserve them for their families' need in the winter.

Now a community canning center doesn't happen overnight. A center takes planning initiative, a willingness to learn new things, and a cooperative spirit. Of course, there may already be a center established in your community so before you start organizing, find out whether one has already been set up. If you live in the country, your county agent will be able to tell you if and where a center is located. In the city, the Office of Civilian Defense can furnish you with information on the location of various centers throughout the city.

However, if you have no center and local abundances justify one, it's up to your community to do something about it. But before a center is established make a survey to determine how many people would use it and how much produce they plan to can. Otherwise the center may be too small or it may be too large for efficient operation.

In order to help communities achieve a center, the Office of Distribution of the War Food Administration, in cooperation with other government agencies and with the National Cannery Association, has prepared a publication, "Community Canning Centers". It gives all the details for establishing a center and will be most useful to the committees or groups planning the center. If you are interested in organizing a center, write to the Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington 25, D. C. for the publication, "Community

Canning Centers". Processing instructions for products other than those listed in the publication may also be obtained from the same source.

In using this publication, there are a few things that should be made clear. If you've ever done any home canning, you'll notice that the temperature and time tables differ from those you've used at home. This doesn't mean that one is right and the other wrong. It's simply that the tables given in the publication are those used in commercial canning and are based on research and findings of the National Cannery Association. Since all canning processes are based on temperature and time, it is important to have mercury thermometers on all retorts used at the center. These thermometers are now available and may be secured from the manufacturer from whom the retorts were purchased.

Regional or district offices of the Office of Distribution will be glad to help you solve any problems that might come up in connection with the use of the thermometers on your retorts. Incidentally, 7 and 14 quart aluminum pressure cookers are now available and a priority rating or purchase certificate is not necessary.

Many women and men, too, and even the older children worked together last year canning the crops from Victory Gardens and from local farms. They filled their larders with goodly supplies of nutritious food and had a good time, to boot. Get together this year with your neighbors and see how profitable it will prove. But don't wait too long. Before you know it, the crops will be ready to go into the cans. So get started now. If there are only a few families who want to get together, a small unit, using pressure cookers, may be set up at a minimum cost and in a short time.

The invasion is on. Demands for canned foods to feed our armies and the liberated peoples will be great. Do your share by helping to provide food for the home front.

